

Draft Country Specific Information: Mali

U. S. Agency for International Development
Office of Food for Peace

Fiscal Year 2015: Title II Request for Applications Title II Development Food Assistance Program

Introduction

The U. S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Office of Food for Peace (FFP) intends to award one five-year assistance agreement totaling approximately \$9 million per year, with the goal of increasing food, nutrition, and income security, and building the resilience of vulnerable populations in the Mopti region of Mali. This Mopti Community Resilience Project (Mopti CRP) is intended to support and contribute to the achievement of USAID/Mali's emerging Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), and particularly its objective of building resilience by increasing the adaptive capacities of vulnerable communities and households (Annex 1).

The successful applicant will have designed a project with a deep understanding of community-specific constraints and capacities, supported by high-quality, field-grounded staff, and driven by a systems approach to change in an environment characterized by social, political, economic, and climatic shocks and stress. Applicants are encouraged to include a phased start-up of program activities to allow for appropriate participatory analysis and decision making at a community level. It is anticipated that the Mopti CRP will be a critical component of an integrated suite of USAID activities aimed at addressing context-specific drivers of vulnerability and fragility, and promoting inclusive growth in the Mopti region. As such, it will be included in the Mission's robust portfolio coordination and review processes. Also a part of the USG's Feed the Future (FTF) initiative, the Mopti CRP will contribute to the "zone of influence" target of a 20% reduction in stunting and 15% reduction in poverty. The project will establish ambitious new targets for increasing adaptive capacities and reducing depth of poverty and acute malnutrition. Activities will be focused in the four districts in Mopti with the highest levels of food and nutrition insecurity and chronic vulnerability based on nutritional, poverty, and climate analysis, and recurring requirements for emergency food assistance. These are: Tenekou, Youvarou, Douentza, and Bandiagara. If stability under a peace agreement is achieved and there is sufficient evidence of project impact, certain activities in this award may be extended into Niafunke, Dire, Goundam, and Timbuktu districts during years 3-5 in coordination with USAID/Mali and the Bureau for Food Security (BFS).

Country/Region Background:

Nearly 40% of households in the Mopti region have a poor or limited food consumption score (2013). The FEWS Net classification for this region has varied from IPC 2 to IPC 3 from 2009-

2013, indicating that households require assistance to meet food consumption gaps. While the average rate of stunting for Mali as a whole is high at 38%, average rates of stunting in the Mopti region stand at 46.5 %. Levels of wasting in Mopti are also very high at 14.7%. Environmental hazards have a profound impact on household's capacity to adapt to risk. Nationwide, this area is the most exposed to both flooding and drought. Increases in climatic variability and the increase in severity from extreme weather events, like flood and drought, heighten the risk to cyclical emergencies in the Mopti CRP target zone.

Potential awardees should refer to FANTA's Food Security Desk Review for Mali (to be posted) for additional background information on the unique food security, health, nutrition and shocks situation in Mali. Applicants should also refer to the Mali Bellmon Estimate Study (BEST, to be posted) for commodity availability and market analysis. Based on the findings of the BEST analysis, challenges in food and nutrition security are due more to lack of access, sub-optimal utilization, and political instability than absence of food in local, regional and national markets. Therefore, FFP does not expect applicants to import significant levels of Title II commodities for distribution in the Mopti region. Rather, applicants are encouraged to identify other resource transfer modalities to enable households to smooth consumption, participate in activities, and take advantage of opportunities which would otherwise be inaccessible, but could lead to improved food security. Other potential modalities could include any combination of cash, vouchers, or asset transfers. Local procurement of commodities may also be proposed if deemed an efficient and effective component of an applicant's project.

Project Goal and Principles:

The goal of the Mopti CRP is to build resilience and significantly improve food, nutrition, and income security in vulnerable populations by assisting Malians to identify and take advantage of transformational opportunities to learn, mitigate, adapt, invest and thrive. The applicant should design a project that supports or complements Government of Mali (GoM), private sector, community and household activities in achieving food and nutrition security.

Applicants are requested to develop a coherent, evidence-based theory of change. Proposals should be informed by a comprehensive understanding of the national and regional dynamics of food security, the programmatic context provided in the following sections, the Mali Mission's draft resilience results framework (Annex 1), and the FFP food security conceptual framework found in [FFP's 2006-2010 Strategic Plan](#). The applicant's theory of change should be supported by a Logframe that is consistent with the need to demonstrate substantial change in chronic and acute malnutrition, household hunger, income, and adaptive capacity, as well as the factors contributing to them. The Logframe should include measurable purpose, sub-purpose, and immediate outcomes that reflect the systems affecting the achievement of the goal. Underlying causes to be reflected and

measured include: social accountability and governance, gender equality and women's empowerment, and youth development.

Applicants are reminded that the Mopti CRP is not a “stand alone” project, but one expected to partner with, support, and leverage a significant portfolio of complementary USAID activities in the region. The importance of the roles of partnership, coordination, and learning, both within the Mopti CRP and between the CRP and other USAID, GoM, and development actors in Mopti, cannot be overstated.

In addition to partnership, the following design and implementation principals underpin USAID's resilience efforts in the Mopti region:

Use evidence-based design drawing from best practice

Applicants are encouraged to review FFP's draft technical reference chapters, FANTA assessments, as well as USAID/Mali technical reviews that are available on {USAID's website}. Applicants should also review the wide range of resources available through the FFP-funded Technical Operational and Performance Support (TOPS) [Food Security and Nutrition Network](#), and the BFS learning platform, [Agrilinks](#). Applicants are encouraged to extrapolate from other experience and learning, proposing innovative concepts and/or use of technologies, as long as proposed pilot activities are supported by a real-time monitoring and learning.

Take a holistic and forward-looking approach that reflects the social, political, economic, and climatic factors that affect stability, resilience, and growth. Food insecurity, undernutrition, climate change impacts, and poverty are multi-sector challenges requiring a thorough understanding of contributing factors, potential drivers, potential change agents and existing bottlenecks. Applicants are encouraged to consider the results and conceptual frameworks included in this document's Annex 1 and FFP strategic plan as they develop their own context-specific theory of change and results frameworks.

Plan jointly for program complementarity, impact, and sustainability. The Mopti CRP is an integral component of USAID/Mali's Missions resilience, climate change adaptation, and BFS's Feed the Future (FTF) efforts in Mali. Work planning will be coordinated across various projects and activities to assist partners in identifying opportunities for increased impact by layering, sequencing and/or integrating efforts.

Promote real-time applied learning, collaboration, and adaptive management. Six-month portfolio consultations will provide CRP partners, FFP and USAID/Mali an opportunity to assess progress, identify constraints, and determine potential course corrections or opportunities to

leverage additional impact. Applicants are encouraged to consider the centrality of continuous monitoring, the development of feedback loops, and implementation of a Mopti CRP learning agenda. At a broader level, participation in USAID's regional resilience learning platform (known as SAREL) will be an important opportunity to participate in building a knowledge base for addressing food insecurity and building resilience in marginal populations in the Sahel.

Support the enfranchisement, aspirations, and agency of women and youth.

Women continue to face disproportionate economic, social and health challenges in Mopti -- including constraints to access land, education, and reproductive health care -- as well as potentially debilitating cultural practices like female genital mutilation and gender-based violence. The need to engage men, women, elders and youth to become active change agents for gender equality and women's empowerment should be reflected throughout the application. Youth, representing 69% of Mali's population, also face significant challenges, and the vast majority is unemployed. Clearly youth represent the shoulders on which a food and nutrition-secure Mali will be built, and youth are to be targeted and included in every facet of the Mopti CRP.

Identify opportunities for transformation within existing systems. Applicants are encouraged to consider a strategic approach that balances facilitation when possible with direct intervention when necessary to minimize the possibility of dependence or short-lived impact. Leveraging, catalyzing or driving change from the capacities, opportunities, and even constraints within a system can help to increase the chances that the change is sustainable. Sustainability is achieved by supporting the legitimacy and accountability of government institutions, and by strengthening existing community, private sector, and public sector pathways for product and service delivery. Market-based approaches that enhance household and community access to goods and services, without creating redundant and unsustainable delivery systems, are a cornerstone to the facilitative approach envisioned for the Mopti CRP.

Development and food security plans exist in every district, for every community, and these are expected to provide a starting place for discourse and planning at a community level. Applicants are strongly encouraged to explore strategies for partnering with district and local government. An effective approach would include "matching" investments at a community level. In the absence of GoM resources, every effort should be made to ensure that Mopti CRP investments align with and contribute to community and district development and food security plans.

Promote innovative approaches and technologies to facilitate "last-mile" service delivery. Communities and households in the districts targeted by this Mopti CRP face multiple access constraints to both public and private services. While USAID/Mali's current

portfolio of activities are contributing to expanded access throughout Mopti, the Mopti CRP's challenge is to help ensure that poorer and more marginalized populations are increasingly linked to emerging services and opportunities.

Support programming with dedicated, field-based staff, equipped with exceptional language skills and cultural understanding; and allow time for community decision making.

The success of the Mopti CRP will largely depend on the quality, adaptability, and dedication of field-based staff and the approaches they use to ensure that project activities within communities are community derived and driven. Applicants are encouraged to build time and resources into their application and budget for both training in participatory theory and methodology and the use of that training during project start-up. Program staff should receive regular refresher training, evaluations, and performance incentives.

Design and use subsidies and/or resource transfers strategically. The vulnerable communities and majority of households served by the Mopti CRP will tend to be labor, income, and asset poor. They are less likely to be able to benefit from agriculture extension and agriculture investments, less likely to be able to keep their children in school, more likely to experience significant hunger gaps, and more likely to require humanitarian assistance on a regular basis. Understanding the role of food assistance as a resource transfer can help to ensure that it is used creatively and appropriately as a means to enable communities and households to make strategic and transformational choices for themselves.

Programmatic Context, Opportunities, and Constraints:

In addition to the convergence of USAID investment in support of resilience, there is a wide range of humanitarian and development activities currently being implemented in the Mopti region with potential implications for new project design. UNICEF, WFP, ICRSAT, ICRAF, and UKAID's BRACED program partners are all engaged in foundational programming in the areas targeted by the Mopti CRP. Geographic and thematic coordination with these and other donors and GoM activities will strengthen the impact of the Mopti CRP. Applicants should identify those activities with which the Mopti CRP must coordinate for efficiency purposes, as well as those most likely to provide opportunities for deeper collaboration, partnership and impact.

The following sections describe key features of the USAID/Mali portfolio that are relevant to the Mopti region. This information is presented to assist applicants to better understand the opportunities for convergence, integration, and sequencing in the areas targeted by the Mopti CRP.

Supporting and Strengthening Human Capacity

Program Context: Health, Nutrition, and WASH. Despite recent progress in decreasing infant, under-5, and maternal mortality in Mali, chronic malnutrition remains a major challenge. Sub-optimal antenatal care, infant and young child feeding practices; poor water, sanitation, and hygiene practices; limited access to primary health care; limited access to and use of family planning methods; and fertility desires and early marriage are among the contributors of malnutrition in the target area. Mali is aligned with the Scaling Up Nutrition movement, but implementation is lagging. At a national level, USAID/Mali is supporting efforts to strengthen health and health data systems. In the Mopti region, USAID/Mali is funding community-based nutrition activities focused on strengthening ag-nutrition and Water Sanitation and Health (WASH) linkages. In addition, its FTF livestock, cereal and horticulture value chain programs have components emphasizing the critical linkages between agriculture production and increased access to nutritious food. The Mali Mission's WASHPlus program (with two years remaining) is increasing access to safe drinking water and promoting Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), and has developed a number of context-specific WASH innovations for the Mopti, Bandiagara, and Bankass regions^{1,2}. UNICEF has prioritized Mali for a scale-up of the expanding Integrated Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (iCMAM) program. With varying target areas and duration of coverage, each of these activities offers opportunities for collaboration, partnership, learning, and potential scale-up in the Mopti CRP's target areas.

Challenges and Opportunities:

There are significant discrepancies between recent DHS (2012-13) and SMART (2014) survey results for stunting prevalence (46.5% vs 23.5%)

There is greater similarity in their findings for wasting in Mopti (DHS at 14.7%, SMART at 11.6%).

Early marriage for girls represents 75% of marriages in the Mopti region.

Modern contraception use in the Mopti region is the lowest in the country at 3.1%.

Throughout Mali, the proportion of married women who want the next child soon has increased, and the number who wants to wait more than two years for the next birth has declined. This, together with high rates of maternal anemia, child malnutrition, and low access and utilization of family planning methods, reflects a critical need for targeted messaging around maternal and child benefits of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies.

¹ WaSHPlus-Mali: www.washplus.org/countries/mali

² WaSHPlus, Year 4 Annual Report: http://www.washplus.org/sites/default/files/washplus_annualreport2014.pdf

Community Health Workers (Relais) in Mopti, as well as local clinics, provide nutrition counseling and referral, but both require additional training and support.

Local sources of fortified foods for complementary feeding are available, if limited

Approximately 55% of the population in Mopti lacks access to a protected drinking water source.

The hydrogeology of the project area is characterized by a high water table, frequent flooding, and soils with low filtering/treatment capacity (i.e. rocky/sandy soils), which poses risks for the contamination of shallow groundwater sources.

Related to the hydrogeology, many of the existing water points are inadequately protected from contamination (e.g., fecal matter, agricultural inputs, or other contaminant sources).

The GoM (Ministry of Water) has limited capacity to support the operations & maintenance of rural water points.

In some parts of Mopti only 18% of households have a latrine, only 14% are treating their water with a recommended method, and less than 10% have a hand washing space.

Among those households that have a washing space, 29% had soap and water, 32% had water only, and 31.8% had no water or soap.

Program Context: Basic Literacy Numeracy and Vocational Skills. While Mali has achieved increased access to education over the past five years, the system faces significant challenges, including high teacher absenteeism, high levels of grade repetition,³ lack of evidence-based reading materials, damage and destruction of schools in the north, and demand exceeding capacity for southern schools to absorb the influx of IDPs from the North.

USAID/Mali supports GoM priorities through programming which focuses on improving the quality of primary school education to strengthen reading skills for early-grade students. Programs also increase community engagement as a way of improving accountability and equitable and increased access to literacy and numeracy and life skills opportunities for out-of-school youth in conflict-affected areas (current focus in Gao). Significant need exists in the Mopti region for increased community involvement in education and increased access to basic numeracy and literacy in adults as well as out of school youth. Equipping youth with productive and mobile livelihood

³ According to UNESCO data, Grade 5 is repeated 18% in Mali, compared to 3% in the Gambia and 5% in Senegal.

options through vocational and entrepreneurial training may mitigate disenfranchisement and contribute to a diversification of income and reduced risk in income and asset-poor households.

Challenges and Opportunities:

The overall literacy rate in Mali stands at 47% with illiteracy in rural areas exceeding 65%.

Rapid population growth has outstripped the capacity of the education system. Currently one in three Malians aged 15-24 are able to read and write.

Although the gender gap in school enrollment is narrowing, within the current literate population 43.1% are male while 24.6% are female.

Education quality tends to be poor. The proportion of adults who can read after six years of schooling is currently 49% compared to rates of 70% and 80% within other countries in the region.

In rural regions, the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers poses significant challenges.

Diversification and Strengthening of Livelihoods

Program Context: Recent analysis carried out by the World Food Program (WFP, Seasonal Livelihoods Analysis) as well as UKAID's BRACED program provides valuable insight into the various livelihood profiles that underpin Mopti's social and economic structure and growth. USAID/Mali, through its FTF portfolio, is providing significant support to Mopti's cereal, livestock, and horticulture value chains. Focus value chains include rice, millet and sorghum; cattle, sheep, goats and horticulture for both household and market consumption. "Climate Smart" and conservation-sensitive technologies are promoted throughout the portfolio, and include the promotion of soil and water conservation and agro-forestry, fertilizer micro-dosing, improved seed varieties, and seed pre-treatment. The Mopti CRP will increase the impact of FTF on extreme poverty in Mopti by:

--Focusing on districts and communities with deeper levels of poverty and more significant challenges to agriculture (e.g., more susceptibility to drought, more degraded soil, less access to markets, etc.) which currently limit their involvement in FTF activities;

--Exploring sectors throughout the targeted districts where opportunities exist for the poor that are not being addressed directly through FTF (e.g., poultry, fish, dairy), and

--Expanding the reach of critical activities currently limited in scope (i.e., vegetable production, soil and water conservation, agroforestry, small animal husbandry, etc.).

Off-farm sources of income play a limited but growing role in Mopti livelihoods. Significant youth unemployment and migration, together with increasing opportunities linked to better market integration, value chain development, and urban demand for skilled and semi-skilled workers warrant significant consideration in any strategy looking at livelihood diversification and risk management in Mopti. Best practice calls for looking to end-markets to define opportunities and risks.

There are several microfinance institutions, as well as other formal and informal sources of financial services available in Mopti. In the vulnerable communities and households targeted by the Mopti CRP, there is likely to be additional demand for training and support for community based mechanisms like Savings and Loans Groups. This will be particularly true for women, who are less likely to be literate and numerate, less likely to have collateral, and thus less likely to have access to formal credit institutions.

Challenges and Opportunities:

In Mopti, the majority of farming households remain dependent on rain fed agriculture, rendering them vulnerable to both rainfall variability and deficits. Other threats include flooding, plant and animal diseases, and pests (birds, locusts).

Migration for work, both within and outside Mali, is an existing income diversification adaptation strategy used by many households in the districts targeted by the Mopti CRP.

Land and labor poor households are not always able to afford migration, and may rely on a combination of activities to source income (e.g., petty trade, day labor, collecting wood and wild foods, borrowing, gifts, and artisan work.)

Gender roles in agriculture remain heavily dictated by traditional religious and cultural norms.

Despite providing the majority of agriculture labor, women face particular challenges accessing land and agricultural inputs, controlling household resources, and influencing decisions regarding the management of natural resources.

Agro-pastoralism dominates Mopti's livelihood profiles. However, there is wide variation in the mix of crop-cultivation and herding, as well as dependence on and participation in markets.

Bourgon, a plant increasingly cultivated for fodder along the Niger and its flood plains, comes with both livelihood opportunities and conflict risks. This is an illustrative case for the need to understand local norms and traditional patterns of access to land, pasture and water in the region.

Wild grains (e.g., *fonio*), tree products, and fruits play a significant role in “lean season” diets, and deserve increased attention—both in terms of their contribution to household nutrition, and their potential contribution to household income.

WFP is currently procuring cereals from FTF cereal value chain farmers, and additional opportunities for partnerships around local procurement may exist.

Climate Change and Risk Reduction and Management

Program Context: Increasing uncertainty and variability of seasonal rainfall increases farmers’ risk for poor yields and crop failure since agricultural production is particularly sensitive to seasonal rainfall distribution. As rainfall becomes less predictable, pastoralists may have greater difficulty finding sufficient fodder and water for their livestock at critical times. Shifts in temperature and rainfall can also affect both human and animal diseases and lead to increased potential for conflict over natural resources.

It is important to ensure that CRP livelihood investments help vulnerable populations manage current climatic variability while assisting them prepare for more severe climate changes in the future. Serious drought or other shocks – whether localized or regional—will occur during the five year time-frame of the Mopti CRP. Applicants are requested to describe approaches to partnership and/or program implementation which anticipate and respond to a surge in immediate needs, even as work continues to reduce the chronic vulnerabilities underpinning them.

USAID/Mali’s climate change program aims to strengthen systems to build resilience to climate change through three interconnected results; 1) use of effective climate information by vulnerable populations (both women and men), 2) inclusion of climate change considerations in governance systems, and 3) adoption of local solutions to climate variability and change in targeted areas. In the Mopti region, USAID/Mali has been supporting a number of field activities to increase the resilience of small-holder farmers to climate change and variability, including soil and water conservation techniques, agroforestry, and household income diversification. In addition, USAID/Mali is supporting the improvement of climate and weather prediction at Mali’s National Meteorological Agency (i.e., Agence Nationale de la Météorologie or Mali Meteo), which has an agro-meteorological program which provides next day, 10-day and seasonal weather forecasts. When these forecasts are used in conjunction with local rainfall data (typically collected through a local rain

gauge) and a detailed cropping calendar developed by the GoM, this program provides farmers with information on what field crop varieties to plant and when.

USAID's new Mali-Adapt program will improve the capacity of stakeholders in the region to be able to use weather and climate information for household-level decision-making; increase the integration of climate change into commune-level planning; and support the adoption and expansion of adaptive practices. These activities are coordinated with FTF programming in the Mopti region and offer opportunities for collaboration, partnership, learning, and potential scale-up in the Mopti CRP's target areas -- particularly in facilitating the increased use of climate information and the identification and adoption of best practices and technologies for adaptation that will support Mopti CRP's overall goal of building resilience and significantly increasing food, nutrition and income security.

Challenges and Opportunities:

The Mopti region is highly vulnerable to climate variability and change and is likely to experience recurrent climatic shocks, including droughts and floods, in the future. Areas away from the Niger River are most exposed to local variations in rainfall, and thus are more likely to suffer from drought. Owing to limited local resources, these areas are also likely to be highly sensitive and lack significant adaptive capacity, making them extremely vulnerable to climate shocks.

According to a recent climate vulnerability mapping exercise conducted for USAID (<http://community.eldis.org/.5b9bfce3/Mali-CV-Mapping-Revised-CLEARED.pdf>) the four districts in which MOPTI CRP will intervene are some of the most vulnerable in the country to climate change.

With rising temperatures affecting the moisture available for agriculture, the northern limit for rain-fed millet and sorghum has already shifted southward by approximately 50 km in the past sixty years.

With limited access to and/or control of land, water, labor, and credit, vulnerable women, youth and very poor may require targeted information and innovative technologies to make optimal, climate-smart use of land, water, and energy.

“Crisis modifiers”—windows for the delivery of humanitarian assistance built into multi-year development efforts-- have been used with mixed success in other contexts of recurrent crisis and may provide valuable lessons for flexible programming in Mali.

Inclusive Governance and Conflict Management

Program Context: Efforts to build social, economic, and climate resilience in the Mopti region will depend on strong governance systems that incentivize best practices and provide secure rights, especially at the local level. In turn, strong local governance depends on inclusive participation, highlighting a critical need to better understand how women, men, and youth participate in local governance processes and collective resource management decisions.

USAID Mali is supporting governance activities that focus on public accountability and people-to-people peacebuilding activities. Priorities include:

- Increasing responsive and accountable local service delivery and transparent management of public financial resources;
- Increasing respect for the Rule of Law by increasing access to justice, and increasing citizen's awareness of their rights;
- Strengthening the role and voice of civil society; and
- Supporting peace consolidation and social cohesion efforts which leverage meaningful civic engagement, and increase the legitimacy and accountability of government institutions.

The Mopti CRP should be uniquely positioned to contribute to these efforts, recognizing that communities have vastly different experiences, perspectives, and capacities, and have been and continue to be subject to a wide range of social and political influences. Working with communities to validate and implement communal development plans, increase access to basic services, strengthen the natural resource base, and reduce climate-related risks will necessitate regular and productive engagement with both traditional and formal government actors, offering strategic opportunities to strengthen positive linkages between the two, and the accountability of both. Supporting the legitimacy of district and commune government structures through joint planning and potentially “matching” investments at the community level will provide another opportunity to contribute to democracy and governance objectives.

Challenges and Opportunities:

Committed to making government more responsive to the needs of its citizenry, the GOM has instituted a process of decentralizing services like health, education, and water management to elected local government. However, significant resource and management constraints, and a perceived lack of transparency are undermining the success of this effort.

Existing plans and processes like the commune-led *Plan de Developpement Social, Economique, et Culturel (PDSEC)* may provide an entry point for government and community dialogue and planning. Emergency preparedness and early action may offer another area where MOPTI CRP capacities can support/facilitate local government engagement and responsiveness. The GoM's *Commisariat de Securite Alimentaire* works closely with the humanitarian community at the national and regional level to coordinate food security and resilience-building activities.

Women tend to be poorly represented in formal and informal decision-making bodies (10 % of parliament and 1 of 49 district Prefects).

The rehabilitation of marginal land, watershed management, and the recovery of pasture and water points are critical for safeguarding livelihoods in MOPTI CRP target areas. However, land and water management issues are part of a complicated landscape of real and perceived access, control and ownership issues.

FFP partners are increasingly incorporating conflict sensitivity and social accountability concepts in their theories of change and program designs.

Social cohesion—within and between communities— serves as a buffer and mitigates against a wide range of social, economic, and political shocks. Repairing damaged social bonds is essential to efforts aimed at consolidating post conflict gains in Mopti and to the north and east.

Youth may be disproportionately disenfranchised and experiencing deficits in education, employment, land, and status contributing to a variety of household and community vulnerabilities.

Activity Targeting:

Vulnerable households and communities in the districts to be targeted by the Mopti CRP are characterized by a variety of physical, economic, and social access constraints. These include poor access to markets, limited access to health services and sanitation infrastructure, limited access to formal and informal education, and limited access to extension, vocational training and other on and off-farm livelihood strengthening services. At the same time, the GoM and donors like USAID are attempting to increase access to basic social services and economic opportunities, while increasing responsive government in Mali. Mopti, in particular, is experiencing increased levels of attention and investment. Achieving the goal of significantly improving food, nutrition, and income security in the highly vulnerable districts targeted by the Mopti CRP, will require community and household-level analysis to identify opportunities and constraints, determine barriers to access and gaps in availability, and to work with communities to establish a clear understanding of the role and targeting of resource transfers. It is strongly recommended that projects use participatory tools and methodologies to identify target communities and/or households most requiring assistance, as well as those actors, whether individual or collective, most likely to drive system change. While the Mopti CRP must focus on improving access to opportunity, knowledge, and assets for the very and extreme poor, this will only be achieved by strengthening and facilitating relationships and building

trust between the individuals, groups, and institutions upon which the sustainability of that access depends.

Collaborative Learning and Adaptive Management

The Mopti CRP provides an opportunity to improve approaches to developing resilience at both the community and individual level. Design and management that empowers field staff to capture feedback, adjust both messaging and interventions, and inform future design and management by USAID/Mali, FFP, and other partners will be critical for engendering real change. Clarity in designing activities that fit the needs of different groups and distinguishes between communal and private pathways to resilience will result in more effective and dynamic programming.

USAID/Mali's Mopti CRP will benefit from learning emerging from the Sahel Resilience Learning Project (SAREL), a five-year (2014-2019) USAID-funded program whose purpose is to provide monitoring, evaluation, collaboration and learning support to USAID's Resilience in the Sahel-Enhanced (RISE) initiative. SAREL is part of four new and ongoing interventions that are operating in targeted zones in northeastern Burkina Faso and west and south-central Niger. SAREL is also expected to bolster a larger, multi-institutional initiative to build resilience and growth in the larger Sahel region by drawing on lessons learned and adaptations already underway.

Applicants are asked to describe their proposed Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting approach, *paying particular attention to how learning will be shared among Mopti CRP partners, and how that learning will translate into real-time project adaptations and management improvements.* The technical reference materials accompanying the FY15 RFA will provide useful background. Potential partnerships have been described in the body of this country specific information. In addition, applicants should identify possible opportunities for collaboration and learning with counterparts in the GoM, civil society, research and academic institutions, and the private sector.

In addition to the analysis specified in the CSI and other basic information contained in the RFA, applicants are also encouraged to include in their proposal a discussion of any critical knowledge gaps that cannot be filled with existing analysis, but which would be necessary to carry out prior to the start-up of certain activities. Applicants should also outline an initial learning agenda capable of supporting their theory of change, and that can be carried out through M&E, special studies, and capture of experiential learning within the consortium, with local partners, and through knowledge sharing with other Mission-funded efforts.

**ADAPTIVE CAPACITY OF VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES AND HOUSEHOLDS
INCREASED**

